

Moran Speaks out on Health Care Issues

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran this week testified before the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health regarding disparities in the health care system. Moran outlined a number of challenges facing rural America in regard to health care, including access to health care services and recruitment of health care professionals.

"We have a number of factors that come together to create significant disparities in the availability and affordability of care in rural America," Moran said. "Kansans must often travel long distances to access health care and services. As Members of Congress continue to come from more and more urban areas, it is important to remind them that a drug store or doctor's office is not on every corner in rural America."

Moran talked about two cornerstones in the rural health care delivery system - hospitals and pharmacies - both of which allow people to access care locally. More than 470 rural hospitals across the country have closed in the past 25 years. Closures are often attributed to smaller volumes of patients compared to urban facilities and the discrepancy in Medicare reimbursement payments. Medicare payments to rural hospitals and physicians are dramatically

less than those to their urban counterparts for equivalent services. Currently, there are seven counties in Kansas without a pharmacy and 32 counties where only one is available. Moran also advocated for adequate and timely reimbursement for community pharmacists for Medicaid prescriptions to help pharmacies remain open and serving Kansans.

Moran also spoke of the benefits of the J-1 Visa Waiver program, which allows foreign-born, U.S.-educated physicians to serve in areas that have a shortage of health professionals. Kansas has recruited 98 physicians to work in underserved areas since 2002 through this program. Moran has been a champion of the J-1 program, which was reauthorized earlier this year in Congress.

Moran is a member of the Rural Health Care Caucus.

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